

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

Small farms are characteristic of agriculture in Cowlitz County. Average size is 75 acres. Over two-thirds of the farms enumerated in the last Census of Agriculture were less than 50 acres in size. Because of mountainous and forested topography, farms are not numerous in Cowlitz County. Cowlitz ranks seventeenth in the state in number of farms, having a total of 1,303 in 1954 according to the Census.

Farm numbers have dropped by 668 since 1945, and the average size has increased by ten acres. In common with the general trend over the state, farms are becoming fewer in number and larger in size. As a rule, medium-sized farms are being consolidated through purchases or leases. Some farms have been subdivided for residential and industrial tracts near Longview and Kelso. Some small part-time farms have become residences. Even with the trend toward establishing larger farms, the present average of 75 acres in Cowlitz County is considerably below the Washington state average of 270 acres.

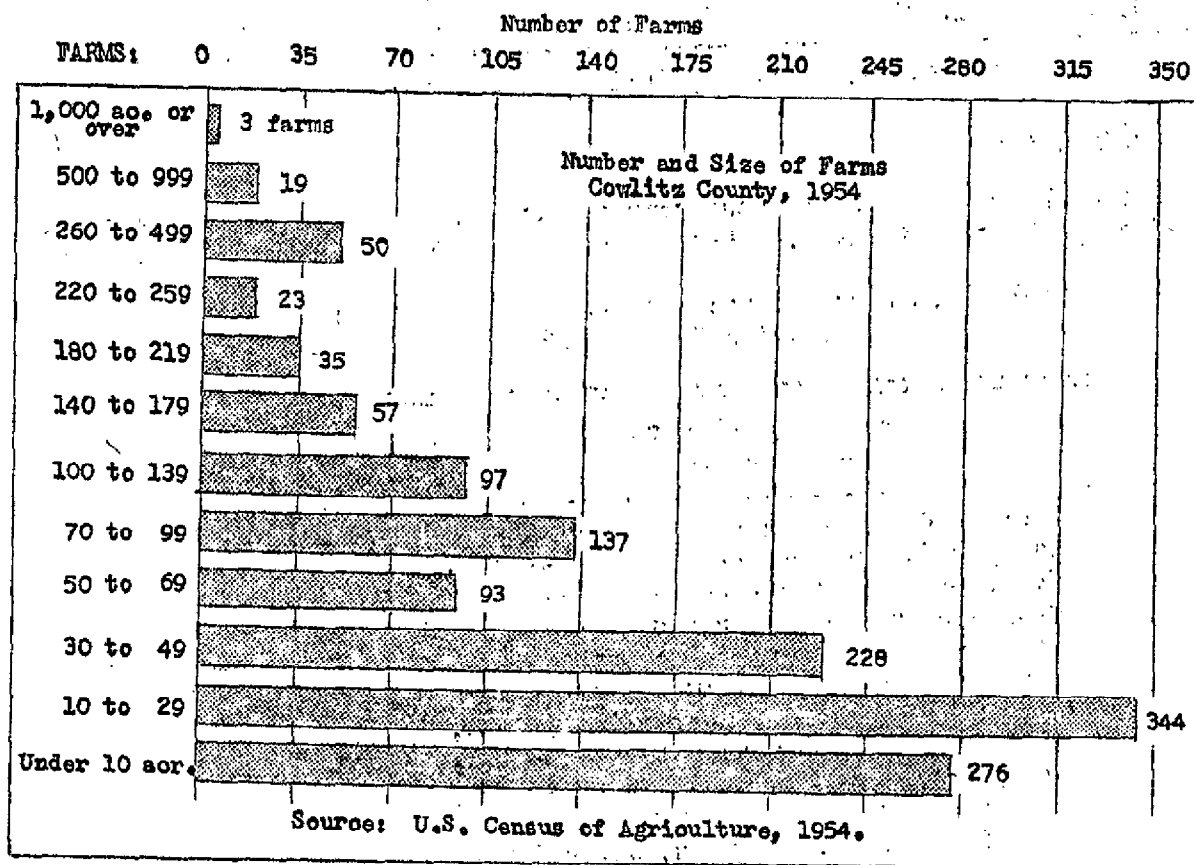


Figure 7.-- Number and Size of Cowlitz County Farms, 1954.

The large number of small farms results from earlier land purchase methods, from high land values near cities and from interest in part-time farming by industrial workers. Many of the original 640 and 320-acre Donation Land Act claims of the 1850's and the 160-acre Homestead Act claims of the 1865-1910 period have been divided into smaller holdings. Between 1910 and 1940 numerous forest industry workers bought 10, 20 and 40-acre tracts of logged-over land in the lower Cowlitz River Valley which were offered for sale by timber companies at \$10 to \$30 per acre.

Table 9.- Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms
Cowlitz County, 1900-1954

Census Year	Total Farms in the County	Total County area in farms (acres)	Average Size of farms in the county (acres)	Percent of County area in farms
1900	751	108,888	145	14.8
1910	909	106,553	117	14.5
1920	1,066	110,259	103	15.0
1925	1,154	93,210	81	12.7
1930	1,117	93,589	81	12.8
1940	1,925	112,474	58	15.3
1945	1,971	127,144	64	17.3
1950	1,487	110,073	74	15.0
1954	1,303	101,707	75	13.9

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1900-1954.

Large-Size Farms

Although small farms are most common, three large holdings in the county exceeded 1,000 acres in 1954. These large farms are situated in hilly areas

Table 10.- Large Farms: Number and General Land Use
Cowlitz County, 1954

Land Utilization on Large Farms	Farms 1,000 to 4,999 acres
Number of farms-----	3 farms
Land in farms-----	5,392 acres
Cropland harvested-----	170 acres
Cropland used only for pasture-----	50 acres
Cropland not harvested and not pastured (idle, fallow land)-----	0
Woodland pastured (cut-over land)---	2,000 acres
Woodland (timber) not pastured-----	1,048 acres
Other pasture-----	1,300 acres

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1954.

with a major part of their acreage in woodland or cut-over land pasture, timberland and other unimproved land and sell pulpwood and small logs and other minor forest products. They also have large acreages certified as tree farms in which land use is under permanent, sustained-yield management to grow timber. Not enumerated by the census as farms are large areas of the Willapa Hills and Cascade Mountains which are in industrial tree farms owned and managed by timber, lumber and paper companies who carry out no food crop or livestock raising on their holdings but concentrate on production of pulpwood and sawlogs as a long-term crop.

Farm Value

Farm land and farm buildings have increased greatly in value since 1940. With the exception of the 1930-1940 period, farm property has steadily gained in value. Values dropped to abnormal lows in the depression years of the early 1930's. The increase in value was rapid again after 1940, more than doubling by 1950. By 1955 the estimated total for all farms, including cleared land, farms, woodland and buildings and all improvements was \$19,023,050. An average farm in 1955 was valued at nearly \$14,000, averaging \$215 per acre. Recent demands for land and timberlands by investors and industries and for residential sites by a growing population have been important factors raising farm real estate values.

Table 11.- Value of Farm Property
Cowlitz County, 1900-1954

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1900	\$ 1,555,810	\$ 3,840	\$ 14
1910	4,120,830	4,530	38
1920	7,037,970	6,600	64
1930	8,488,080	7,400	90
1940	7,961,380	4,130	70
1950	16,211,270	10,900	155
1954	19,023,050	13,970	215

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Tenure

A large majority (about 86 out of each 100 farmers) own and operate their farms. Tenancy is uncommon in Cowlitz County. There were only 86 farms operated by tenants in 1954. Many farms have remained in ownership of the pioneer families who established them. About 8 percent of farms were operated by part owners in 1954, showing an increase during the last 30 years. This pattern is caused by elderly persons and part-time workers living on farms and maintaining ownership of farm residences while letting other farmers operate part of the land for a share of the crops used or sold. Farms operated by managers numbered only 3 in 1954.

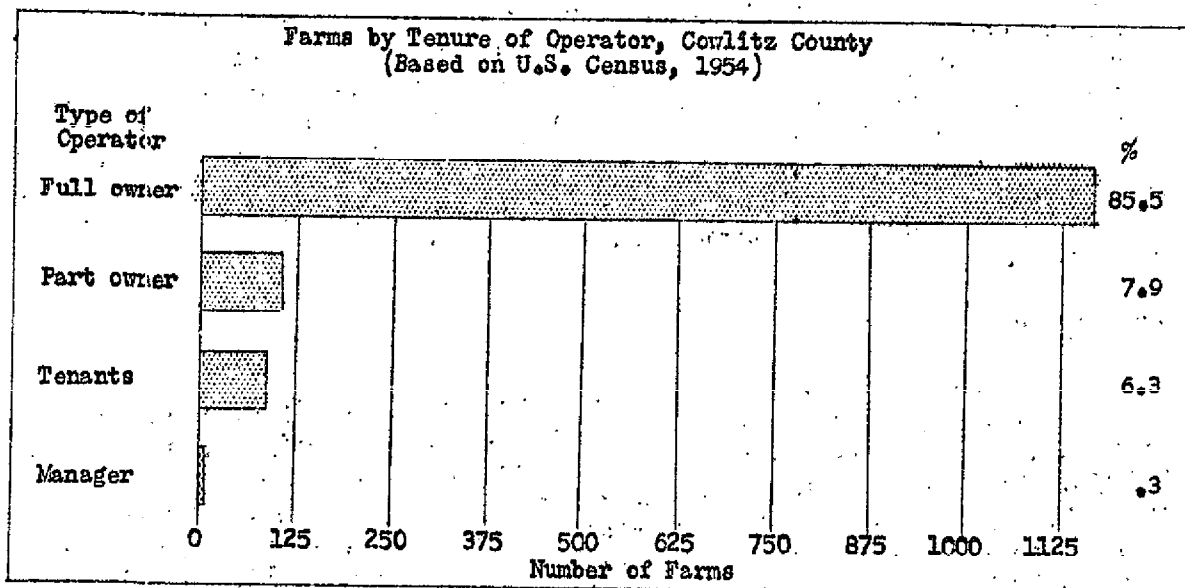


Figure 8.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Cowlitz County, 1954.

Table 12.- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
By Tenure of Operator, Cowlitz County
1925-1954

Year	Number Farms in County	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms
1925	1,154	1,000	86.6	49	4.2	2	.3	103	8.9
1930	1,174	881	75.0	95	8.1	9	3.1	162	13.8
1935	1,548	1,194	72.4	143	8.7	3	.2	308	18.7
1940	1,925	1,541	80.0	76	3.9	4	.3	304	15.8
1945	1,971	1,648	83.6	148	7.5	5	.1	170	8.6
1950	1,485	1,303	87.7	98	6.6	2	.1	84	5.6
1954	1,362	1,165	85.5	108	7.9	3	.3	86	6.3

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Types of Farms

Farm types in Cowlitz County are fairly well diversified and over three-fourths cannot be classified by type because of the varied nature of their incomes. Many are residential or part-time farms. Dairy farms are the most common specialized type, numbering 130 and Cowlitz is seventeenth in number of dairy operations in the state. In livestock farms raising beef animals, sheep or hogs Cowlitz ranked nineteenth, having 87 of this type. Since 1949 specialized dairy, poultry and general livestock farms have become fewer while units specializing in vegetables and cash field crops have gained slightly.

Table 13.- Types of Farms, Cowlitz County, 1954

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	1,362	
Field-crop farms.....	5	
Cash-grain.....	0	
Other field-crop.....	5	.4
Vegetable farms.....	5	.4
Fruit-and-nut farms.....	15	1.1
Dairy farms.....	130	10.0
Poultry farms.....	35	2.7
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry	87	6.7
General farms.....	20	
Primarily crop.....	5	.4
Primarily livestock.....	0	
Crop and livestock.....	15	1.1
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....	1,006	77.2

Source: U.S. Census, AgricultureFarmland Utilization

Major types of land use on Cowlitz County farmland are woodland-pasture and woodland. Nearly two-thirds of all farmland is in these two categories.

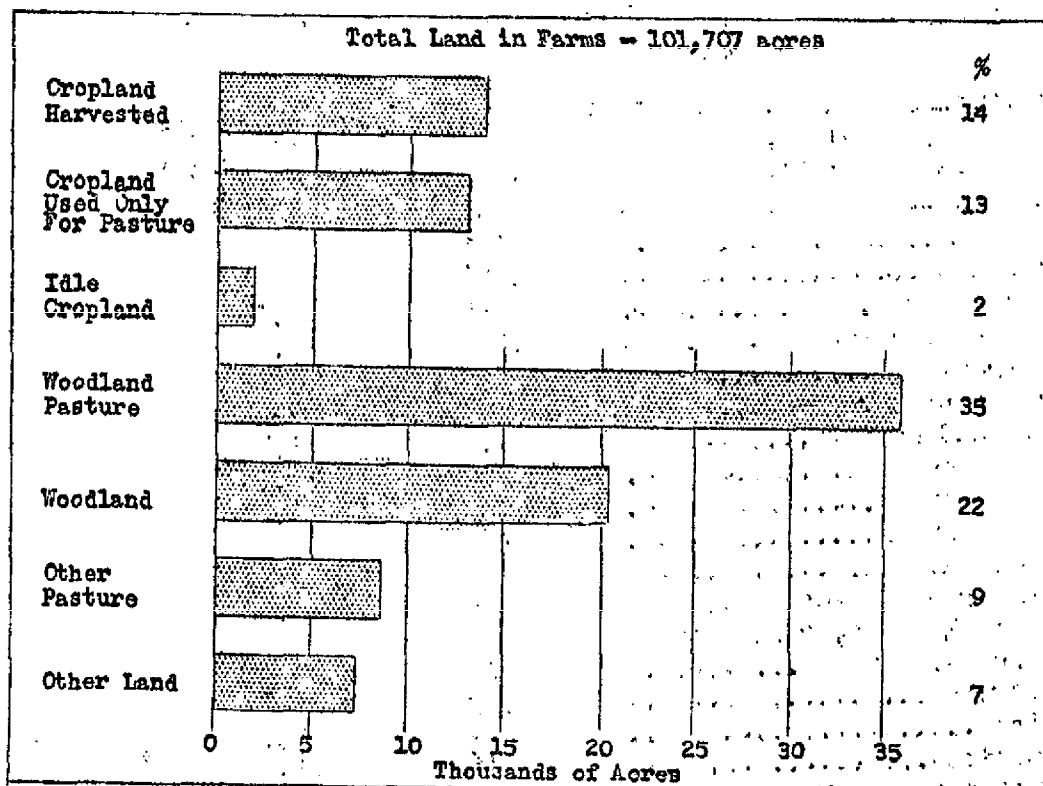


Figure 9.- Utilization of Farmland in Cowlitz County, 1954.

Large acreages in wooded land is typical of western Washington which was originally heavily forested. Improved and cultivated pasture is a third major type of land use. There are several reasons for so much wooded, unimproved and uncleared land in Cowlitz County. One reason is that farmers find it costly in labor and machinery to clear brushy, cut-over land. Another condition is that the rough terrain and steeper slopes have become reforested after being logged-over. Many farmers graze cattle on cut-over stumpland which has enough trees so that the Census classifies it as woodland pasture. Woodland acreage is remaining about the same. Many farmers have started to practice forestry, leaving dense, regrowth stands undisturbed to furnish timber for farm use or future commercial cutting.

Farm Residence and Operation

Cowlitz County rural life is characterized by a large amount of part-time farming. Many persons live on the land and divide their employment between farm work and wage earning in nearby industries. The lower Columbia River lumber, paper and other forest products industries provide a variety of full-time or seasonal jobs within commuting distance. At some time during 1954, about two-thirds of all Cowlitz County farmers worked off their land in some other industry. Of this group, 870, or 67 percent of all farm operators, worked in non-farm industries more than 100 days during the year. Over one-half of the operators earned more from off-farm work than was received from sales of livestock, crops and other farm products. Cowlitz County part-time farming exceeds the state average of 46 percent, but is about average for western Washington where a large number of small farm owners gain wages from industrial employment.

Table 14.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms
Cowlitz County, 1954.

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	938	68.9
Electricity.....	1,258	92.4
Television set.....	585	43.0
Piped running water.....	1,168	85.8
Home freezer.....	410	30.1
Electric pig brooder.....	--	--
Power feed grinder.....	15	1.1
Milling machine.....	200	14.7
Grain combines.....	20	1.5
Corn pickers.....	--	--
Pick-up balers.....	81	5.9
Field forage harvesters.....	25	1.8
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks.....	112	8.2
Motortrucks.....	733	53.8
Tractors.....	832	61.1
Automobiles.....	1,116	81.9

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Farm Facilities

In 1954 most farms in Cowlitz County were fairly well equipped with modern facilities which save labor and make rural life easier. Farm homes in the Cowlitz and lower Lewis River valleys in the vicinities of Longview, Kelso, Castle Rock, Kalama and Woodland were on a par with the highest developed farming districts in the state. A minority of farm places in remote districts of the Willapa Hills and Cascade Mountains tended to reduce the county average in rural use of telephone, electricity and farm machinery. Rural farm electrification is good, with 92 percent of farms having electrical service. Nearly half of farm homes had television in 1954. Milking machines were used on all the 200 specialized dairy farms. Over one-half the farms had tractors and motor trucks.

Irrigation and Facilities

Because of the dry summer climate and the needs for higher yields of pasture and vegetable crops, there has been an increasing interest in irrigation. Dairymen find that sprinklers greatly increase the carrying capacity of pastures. From 1950 to 1954 the pasture area under sprinkler irrigation increased over four times and 25 additional farms put in irrigation systems. Vegetable and berry growers also expanded the use of sprinkler irrigation. About 300 additional acres of cropland were brought under irrigation between 1950 and 1954. The sharp trend toward more use of farm-owned sprinkler and gravity systems to provide water for grasslands and crops follows a general pattern going on throughout parts of western Washington. Farmers are specializing in more high-value commercial crops. Hay and pasture shortages in recent years and increased costs of feeds purchased by dairymen are other factors causing a continued investment in irrigation equipment.

Table 15.- Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage
Cowlitz County, 1950 and 1954

Item	1950	1954
Number of irrigated farms.....	27	53
Land irrigated ^{1/}	980 acres	2,045 acres
Irrigated land in farms according to use:		
Farms irrigating crops.....	16	34
Farms irrigating pasture.....	13	38
Acres of crops irrigated.....	714	1,018
Acres of pasture irrigated.....	225	1,025

^{1/} Includes all land irrigated by sprinkler systems.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Table 16.- Cowlitz County's Rank Compared With
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity	Year
<u>General</u>			
Land area.....	28	733,440 acres	1954
Number of farms.....	17	1,362 farms	1954
Land in farms--percent.....	29	13.9 percent	1954
Average size of farms.....	30	75 acres	1954
Cropland harvested.....	31	13,956 acres	1954
Rural farm population.....	17	5,435 persons	1950
Total county population.....	10	53,369 persons	1950
<u>Cash farm income</u>			
Value of all farm products sold..	29	2,694,404 dollars	1954
Value of livestock sold.....	23	1,908,027 dollars	1954
Value of crops sold.....	31	444,972 dollars	1954
<u>Livestock on farms</u>			
All cattle and calves.....	24	17,700	1954
Milk cows.....	15	5,450 head	1954
Hogs.....	30	828 head	1954
Chickens.....	16	49,991 birds	1954
Horses and mules.....	24	614 head	1954
Sheep and lambs.....	27	1,085 head	1954
<u>Dairy and poultry products sold</u>			
Value of dairy products sold....	15	1,198,714 dollars	1954
Whole milk sold.....	15	27,736,000 pounds	1954
Value of poultry products sold...	18	257,038 dollars	1954
Chickens sold.....	14	78,310 birds	1954
Eggs sold.....	17	364,433 dozen	1954
<u>Important crops harvested</u>			
Mint oil.....	3	480 acres	1954
Clover and timothy.....	11	5,000 acres	1954
Oats.....	31	710 acres	1954
Vegetables.....	19	411 acres	1954
Fruits.....	21	435 acres	1954

Sources: U. S. Census, Agriculture, 1954.
U. S. Census, Population, 1950.